Heart at Work

YOUR JOB CAN GIVE YOU HEARTACHE... LITERALLY. Research suggests that on-the-job stress doubles your risk of dying from heart disease and contributes to obesity and high cholesterol levels. Sitting behind a desk all day and eating snacks from the vending machine only adds to your problems—and your waistline. When it comes to heart health, how you can make your workplace work for you?

Exercise a Little, a Lot

Don't have time to work out for the recommended 30 minutes a day? Research shows you can reap the same health benefits by engaging in shorter, less-demanding sessions. "The key is consistency—doing some exercise every day, in bouts as short as 10 minutes each," says John M. Jakicic, Ph.D., director of the Physical Activity and Weight Management Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh. In a study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, Jakicic and his colleagues found that women who took a brisk 10-minute walk three times a day for a year achieved the same weight loss—nearly 20 pounds—as those who engaged in longer, more intense workouts. "Many used the first 10 minutes of their lunch break to walk, then walked more on coffee breaks," says Jakicic.

Have a Power Breakfast

The results of a 10-year study indicate that—all things being equal—daily breakfast-eaters are up to 50 percent less likely to become obese or develop diabetes-causing insulin resistance syndrome. In short, your morning meal could seriously improve your cardiovascular health. "People who have breakfast typically eat more fiber and fewer calories throughout the day, especially from foods high in saturated fat and dietary cholesterol," says researcher Linda Van Horn, Ph.D., R.D., of Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago. The best breakfast for heart health? "Few foods can top the benefits of whole-grain cereals and breads, which are a great source of dietary fiber, heart-healthy B vitamins and other nutrients," says Van Horn. "Add non-fat dairy and fruit, and you are on your way to meeting your nutritional goals before you even walk out the door."

Laugh It Off

Think your boss is a joke? Use it to your advantage. "Laughter acts against stress," says Michael Miller, M.D., director of the Center of Preventive Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical System. "It releases chemicals that appear to counteract some of the detrimental effects of stress, which can raise blood pressure and constrict blood vessels." He advises placing humorous family photos in your work space. "And you could visit www.jokes.com or other websites... of course, only on your lunch hour."

Share the Bottom-Line Benefits

Healthy employees are cheaper employees. According to the World Health Organization, every dollar spent on wellness programs saves three dollars in medical costs, while workplace fitness programs reduce short-term sick leave by up to 32 percent and increase productivity up to 52 percent. — *By Sid Kirchheimer*
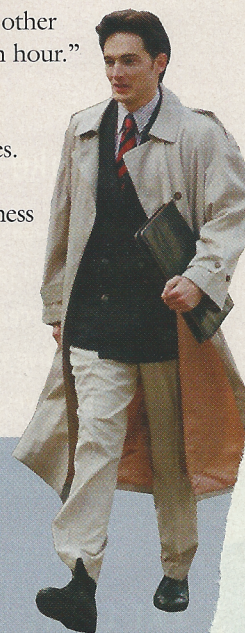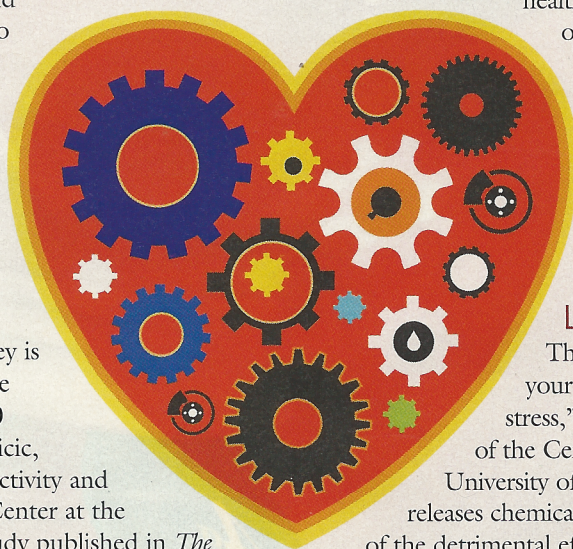
Monitor Your Miles

Taking the stairs instead of the elevator and parking far away from your office can help you squeeze more walking into a workday. But how much do you need to do? Researchers suggest you **shoot for 10,000 steps a day**—about five miles. Wearing a pedometer is the best way to track how much you trek.